

and it so happens that the representation in this house has to be adjusted from time to time in such manner and subject to such conditions as this parliament, composed of the representatives of all the provinces, determines.

When I hear these suggestions that the constitution of the Canadian parliament results from a delegation made by these original colonial legislatures I sometimes wonder how that can be seriously argued, when it is remembered that at the time the two groups of population with respect to which the argument is urged so forcibly are the group of Anglo-Saxon descent and the group of French descent. At that time they were both in one legislature, and their representatives appointed by that one legislature participated in the conference which led to the enactment of the statute of 1867. It seems inconceivable to me that John A. Macdonald, afterwards Sir John A. Macdonald, was not as much a representative of the group for which he spoke before the first of July, 1867, after confederation had been proclaimed, as he was the representative of that group in the various conferences that took place prior thereto. And similarly that George Etienne Cartier, afterwards Sir George Etienne Cartier, was not as much a representative of the group for whom he spoke and negotiated in the Quebec conference after the proclamation of the statute of 1867 as he was before that time.

These are matters about which one must be rather careful. I know there is no desire anywhere to do anything that is not in accord with the true spirit and intent that presided over these deliberations; but it is apt to appear a bit strange to have it constantly urged that for the purposes of any amendment whatsoever to the British North America Act the persons who are competent to express opinions are the provincial legislatures. They are competent to express opinions on all matters allocated in the statute to provincial jurisdiction; but as to everything that was put within central jurisdiction by the statute of 1867, the statute provided how the people were to be represented and to what assembly His Majesty and his constitutional advisers were to be responsible.

This matter of adjusting representation is something which in express terms falls to be determined by the parliament of Canada. Of course there are rules expressed in the section which can be modified only by the legislative body which enacted them. Section 51 of the original act provided that:

On the completion of the census in the year one thousand eight hundred and seventy-one, and of each subsequent decennial census, the representation of the four provinces—

By virtue of the decision expressly made by the supreme court and the privy council in the Prince Edward Island case, that has to be read "the representation of all the provinces." I continue:

—shall be readjusted by such authority, in such manner, and from such time as the parliament of Canada from time to time provides,—

Subject to the subsections expressed. It is the parliament of Canada, subject to such action as may be taken by the parliament of the United Kingdom, which is the only body having been given jurisdiction in that regard in 1867. And under the Statute of Westminster it is now provided that the parliament of the United Kingdom will not act in respect of Canadian affairs except upon request. According to constitutional practice that request has to be expressed in the form of humble addresses presented to His Majesty.

As to whether or not it is proper at this time that there should be a modification made that would provide for a truly proportionate representation based on population, it is for this house to decide on this resolution. There can be no doubt that the time will come when the application of these restrictive rules will become unbearable. The general principle is representation according to population. There will come a time—there cannot be any doubt about that—when anything that gets seriously out of line with that principle will be considered unbearable. In this house there are twenty representatives who are not here because there is behind them the quotient provided for by the general rule. In my opinion that is sufficient to make it desirable to get back to a rule which will provide for a truly proportionate distribution of the representatives in this house. Should it be 255; should it be 245, or 238? These are matters of detail. But it so happens that by making it 255 there seems to be at this time only one province which will see its representation diminished, and there it will be diminished by only one.

It is a matter of practical experience, I think, that it is always painful to bring about a readjustment which requires a diminution in representation. It does not seem to me that a house composed of 255 members would be inordinately large, not only in view of the numbers of our population but in view of the immense territory the representatives in this house represent. Do we always realize that the area of this country is enormous—from one ocean to the other, from the boundaries of the United States to the north pole, an area scarcely smaller than the whole of Europe and somewhat larger than the whole of the United States? Of course, were it not for the